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THE SIERRA CLUB

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The Sierra Club was organized in San Francisco, in 1892, in the early days of the forestry movement. Its main purposes were to aid in that movement, and, as its articles of incorporation express it, "to explore, enjoy, and render accessible the mountain regions of the Pacific Coast, to publish authentic information concerning them; to enlist the support and co-operation of the people and the government in preserving the forests and other natural features of the Sierra Nevada Mountains."

At the time the greater part of the wonderful range from Mt. Shasta on the north to Mt. Whitney near its southerly extremity was as unknown and of as little interest to the average Californian as were the Andes or the Himalayas. A few books and magazine articles describing the range had been published, and a handful of men had acquired the habit of following in the footsteps of John Muir and other exploring spirits and spending their vacations as high in the mountains as they could penetrate. To another, less desirable type of visitor, indeed, the Sierra Nevada had long been familiar ground. The sheep men were yearly driving huge bands of "hoofed locusts" through the forests and mountain meadows and were rapidly denuding them of every form of vegetation, from the seedling conifers down to the tiniest blade of grass. To awaken public sentiment and frame laws regulating the grazing of sheep and cattle; to create forest reserves; to protect the watersheds; to establish national parks; to save the more wonderful regions from destructive invasion of any sort, and finally to arouse the people themselves to a knowledge of the great, unexplored treasure-house that lay neglected at their very doors—these were a few of the undertakings that the Sierra Club set for itself.

During the earlier years of the club's existence its mountaineering activities were limited to individual endeavor or to the work of small parties of members. The exploration of the little known alpine regions, the first ascents of difficult peaks, the laying out and

mapping of trails occupied the attention of many of the members throughout the summer months, and the results of their observations and discoveries were chronicled in the "Sierra Club Bulletin," an illustrated magazine published semi-annually for our members and for exchange with other mountaineering clubs.

After John Muir, the president of the Sierra Club, who has made the Sierra Nevada his study for forty years, and who has done more than any other man to bring its beauties to the notice of the American public, one of the members most active in the exploration of the mountain chain is Professor J. N. Le Conte, whose work for many summers past culminated last year in the discovery of a route for pack animals along the crest of the Sierra from the Yosemite to the Kings River.

One public work, in which the Sierra Club took an active part, was the movement for the recession of the Yosemite Valley to the Federal Government. The Yosemite Valley had been set aside as a state park long before the Yosemite National Park was established, and for many years it existed as a separate entity, a park within a park. It was under a different administration, which caused endless confusion, and was greatly handicapped in its development by the smallness of the appropriation that the state could afford to make it. Public opinion, however, was at first strongly against its recession, and it was only after a long fight that the bill passed the state legislature in 1904. The event has proved the change to have been a wise one, as under the federal rule travel has already greatly increased and still greater improvements and a larger appropriation for its maintenance are confidently expected for the future.

In 1901, nine years after the founding of the club, a series of annual outings or excursions to the more remote and inaccessible portions of the Sierra Nevada was inaugurated, whereby one hundred and fifty people were given the yearly opportunity to learn the delight of Sierra days. The undertaking was quite a formidable one, as at that date a distance of from fifty to sixty-five miles lay between the ends of the railroads and the zone where the wagon roads ended and the trails to any of the greater features of the Sierra—the Tuolumne Meadows, the Hetch Hetchy Valley, the Kings or the Kern Canyon—began. Fortunately only the lightest outfits are required for a Sierra sojourn. The mountain climate is the most

hospitable for campers that the world has to offer. Rain never falls at night and as the infrequent thunder storms are only the brief episode of an afternoon, tents are quite unnecessary. A pack train of from fifty to sixty animals carries all our baggage, the general commissary supplies, the portable stoves, the kitchen utensils, and the modest personal outfits, including in their forty pound limit the sleeping bags and entire wardrobe of the owner—in short, all the impedimenta for a month's absence from civilization.

The personnel of the party, which is limited to one hundred and fifty persons, is made up of Sierra Club members, members of other mountaineering clubs of America, and, in case of vacancies in the list, of a few outsiders recommended by members. The outings are co-operative, not designed to bear profit but only to cover the necessary expenses, and though subsidiary to the club, are self-supporting. The chairman of the outing committee has absolute authority over them and all questions of itinerary, personnel, arrangement of camp and discipline are settled by him.

The outings usually last a month. From the end of the wagon road we travel afoot, the hardship of the long miles lightened by the genial fellowship of the open trail; for guides we have the geological survey maps; for inns any convenient grouping of trees, meadow and stream; for beds pine needles or fir boughs; for roof-tree a canopy of stars. It is almost impossible to convey to any one who has not experienced it the endless joy of this untrammelled existence, the charm of traveling day by day through scenes of wonderful beauty, climbing long ridges into widening horizons, pierced by snowy mountain ranges, or swinging down through the wooded sides of some deep canyon to its level floor where a trout stream sings its way among flowery meadows.

The presence of many distinguished men has made one feature of the outings a notable one. Around the campfire in the evenings we have listened to informal talks on geology, or the plant and animal life of the Sierra, given by men of world-wide reputation. Grove Karl Gilbert, C. Hart Merriam, John Muir, and many others have often spoken before us and taught us to enjoy the mountains more intelligently and to take an active interest in all things concerning them. Musicians and poets have not been wanting to grace the lighter part of the evening's entertainment.

These outings have proved to be of enormous benefit to the

club's purposes. Those of us who have learned to know the uplifting of spirit, the renewal of bodily strength and activity of mind which accompanies every visit to these wonderful alpine regions, feel that we owe it, not only to the present, but to future generations, to do our utmost to preserve in its natural beauty some portions of the Sierra wonderland for the enjoyment and benefit of the public. We believe that the interest in mountaineering and the recognition of the value of national parks as public recreation grounds is so far only in its infancy in America, and that before many years shall have passed our American mountaineering clubs will number their members by the hundred thousands as they now do in France and Germany. Our membership is now over 1,200, and is growing each year.

The highest uses of our national parks will ultimately be not to the traveler, but to the workers of the state. Many years ago Josiah Royce pointed out one danger of our California climate, "In that the comparative evenness of the successive seasons prompts active people to work too steadily, to skip their holidays, and by reason of their very enjoyment of life, to wear out their constitutions with overwork." It is a danger that the years have by no means lessened, but rather increased. Experience is teaching us the absolute necessity for recreation, above all out-of-door recreation, as a health-giving factor in our civilized life.

The claim has been put forward in a recent controversy over the inviolability of national parks that these regions are the rich man's playground, and that the wage earner will never receive any benefit from them. In no sense is this true. The rich man, with the whole world as his playground, has no especial need for the national park. While in this stage of our development the average unenlightened man who works with his hands may derive no immediate benefit from it, we have another type of wage earner to consider—the thousands of men and women who work with their brains, in offices, in schoolrooms, in colleges, in hospitals, in business houses, many of them people of liberal education and refined tastes with a craving for beautiful things as strong as the craving among baser natures for cheap excitement. The worker with his hands has his amusement parks and his picnic grounds, more of them every year; but for the higher type of workman no form of rest and recreation can compare with the untrammelled life in the

open air that our national parks offer him for his much-needed holiday.

The national parks, then, stand not as a luxury for the few, but as a growing need for thousands in this complex life of ours; and if the Sierra Club has helped, be it ever so little, toward bringing about the recognition of their value and urging the people to their support, its organization has not been in vain.

This paper would hardly be complete without mention of the other two mountaineering clubs of the Pacific Coast, the "Mazamas," of Oregon, and the "Mountaineers," of Washington. The Mazama Club was organized on the summit of Mt. Hood, July 19, 1894, and it was the first club to institute annual outings. "The purposes of the club are to explore mountains, to disseminate authoritative and scientific information concerning them, and to encourage the preservation of forests and other features of mountain scenery in their natural beauty." It is more distinctively a mountaineering club than either of the others as the requirements for membership are as follows: "Any person who has climbed to the summit of a snow-peak, on which there is at least one living glacier, and the top of which cannot be reached by any other means save on foot, is eligible to membership." The Mazama Club has done some notable scientific work in connection with its outings and through the efforts of individual members, and these are recorded in their publication, "The Mazama." One of its chief accomplishments was the creation of the Crater Lake National Park.

More recently, in July, 1906, the "Mountaineers," a club with headquarters at Seattle, was organized. Its first outing was to the Olympic Mountains where the first ascent of Mt. Olympus was made. As a direct result of the work of this club President Roosevelt declared the Olympic region a national monument, and its 1,500,000 acres of peaks, ice fields and glaciers, and its alpine parks, the refuge and habitat of some three thousand of the Roosevelt elk, altogether make up a national playground that is destined to become celebrated throughout the world. The "Mountaineers" record their investigations and transactions in a magazine called the "Mountaineer," which they have developed into a splendid annual. The purposes of the "Mountaineers" are: "To explore the mountains, forests and water courses of the Pacific Northwest, and to gather into permanent form the history and traditions of this region; to

preserve, by protective legislation or otherwise, the natural beauty of the northwest coast of America; to make frequent or periodical expeditions into those regions in fulfilment of the above purposes. Finally, and above all, to encourage and promote the spirit of good fellowship and comradery among the lovers of out-door life in the West."